DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 447 950 PS 029 059

AUTHOR	Robertson, Anne S., Ed.
TITLE	Parent News Offline, 2000.
INSTITUTION	ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education, Champaign, IL.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
ISSN	ISSN-1526-2596
PUB DATE	2000-00-00
NOTE	14p.; For 1999 issues, see ED 436 265.
CONTRACT	ED-99-CO-0020
AVAILABLE FROM	National Parent Information Network, ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education, Children's Research Center, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 51 Gerty Drive, Champaign, IL 61820-7469. Tel: 800-583-4135 (Toll Free); Web site: http://ericeece.org.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022) -- ERIC Publications (071)
JOURNAL CIT	Parent News Offline; v2 n12 Spr-Fall 2000
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Elementary Secondary Education; Home Visits; Internet; Middle School Students; Newsletters; *Parent Education; *Parent Materials; *Parent Student Relationship; Parenting Skills; *Parents; Self Esteem
IDENTIFIERS	*National Parent Information Network; Zero Tolerance Policy

ABSTRACT

This document is comprised of the two issues in volume 2 of "Parent News Offline," a publication of the National Parent Information Network (NPIN) designed to introduce those without Internet access to the activities and information available through NPIN. The Spring 2000 issue contains the following articles: (1) "'Zero Tolerance': What Parents Should Know" (Anne S. Robertson); (2) "Helping Middle School Students Make the Transition into High School" (Nancy B. Mizelle); and (3) "Self-Esteem: Too Much of a Good Thing?" (Peggy Patten). The Reading Pathfinder Web site is also highlighted. The Fall 2000 issue contains the following articles: (1) "Home Visiting as a Tool To Ease High School Transitions" (Anne S. Robertson); and (2) "Public Schools Partnering with Faith Communities" (Anne S. Robertson). Articles from the online edition of Parent News concerning school Internet access and on educational alternatives are highlighted. Both issues also list recent publications from NPIN and the ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education. (HTH)

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ED 447 950

Parent News Offline, 2000.

Anne S. Robertson, Ed.

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Parent News Offline

Vol. 2, No. 1, Spring 2000

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ERIC

"Zero Tolerance": What Parents Should Know

Anne S. Robertson

In recent years, school districts across the country have been developing stricter disciplinary guidelines around issues that are related to student and school safety or substance abuse. These stricter measures are designed to comply with the 1994 Gun-Free Schools Act (GFSA) that required all states to pass legislation to enforce federal gun-free-school laws and expel students who bring a firearm onto school property (Sinclair, 1999). Although the federal act specifically addressed issues related to the possession of a firearm, many states and individual school districts took the opportunity to broaden the scope of their existing guidelines and to develop policies to include other types of infractions such as possession of a weapon, substance abuse, or aggressive behavior. The policies are frequently termed "zero tolerance" and require that school administrators and school board members consistently enforce certain infractions, such as possession of a weapon or illegal substance, with strong punitive measures. GFSA guidelines require that students be expelled for at least a year, although it is not unusual for individual school districts to expel students for a longer period of time.

In most districts, suspension or expulsion leaves the student without benefit of an alternative educational placement.

Many parents and educators supported the move to stricter guidelines, hoping that administrators would have more discipline options available to gain control of unruly students and create a safer school environment. Although everyone can agree with the goal of developing safe, drug-free schools, the success or impact of zero-tolerance policies on certain students, the overall school climate, and the community has not yet been studied (Portner, 1997). Zero-tolerance policies may actually undermine the long-term goal of building a safe learning community. As noted by U.S. District Judge James H. Jarvis, "Zero hour has indeed arrived for the zero-tolerance policy" (Walsh, 1999).

Judge Jarvis was referring to a case involving a high school junior in Tennessee who was expelled after a knife was discovered in the glove compartment of the student's car, despite the undisputed evidence that the student had no knowledge of the presence of the knife. Judge Jarvis reversed the board's decision, writing that "The board, in its zeal to implement the zero-tolerance policy, trampled upon the rights of a student who was simply in the presence of someone who probably violated the policy" (Walsh, 1999).

Recently, an incident in Illinois made headlines after Jesse Jackson and the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition protested the 2-year expulsion of six students for

fighting during a football game, even though there were no weapons involved or serious injuries reported. Jackson's Rainbow/PUSH Coalition filed a lawsuit on behalf of the students, but in this case, Judge Michael McCusky supported the decision of the school board and upheld the expulsion (Barnes, 2000). Educators, law enforcement officials, parents, and community members are clearly divided on the appropriateness of zero-tolerance policies to enforce school order and safety while attempting to build a learning community that serves all students.

What happens to the many students who are expelled or suspended? In most school districts, suspension or expulsion essentially bars the student from school property and a public education for a designated period of time. While some school districts have a limited number of alternative placements for disruptive youth, in most districts, suspension or expulsion leaves the student without benefit of an alternative educational placement. Students who have a supportive family or teacher may be fortunate enough to transfer to another public or private school. Unfortunately, under GFSA, about 57% of the expelled students are left without access to public education or productive structured alternatives that would help keep them "off the streets" and out of any further trouble (Sinclair, 1999).

Most educators, community members, and parents agree that leaving troubled youth to their own devices for a large part of the day is not a good idea, but this is essentially the impact of zero-tolerance policies. A growing number of people are concerned about zero-tolerance policies, and recently a consortium of over 45 professional organizations representing the juvenile justice system, social advocacy groups, and education communities drafted a position statement calling for educational, psychological, mental health, or crisis intervention for all expelled students (Cardman, 2000, p. 1).

President Clinton also has expressed his concern for suspended or expelled students through a reauthorization proposal of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that would require that school districts provide suspended or expelled students with appropriate counseling, education, or supervision to meet individual needs and to challenge students to continue with their education (Cahir, 1999). Unfortunately, because the mandate is not funded and insufficient funding is one of the main reasons that most districts currently lack alternative programs, it is unlikely that the revision will be included until new resources have been identified to support the development of new alternative programs.

Parents play a critical role in guiding their children so that they will not be affected by zero-tolerance policies. Parents can help their child by:

- **Knowing what types of infractions in their child's school have been identified under the parameters of zero tolerance.**
- **Supporting teachers and administrators who are trying to maintain a healthy learning environment so that the child witnesses the parents' respectful example.**
- **Being aware of situations where their child may feel threatened by another student or where their child may be acting aggressively.**
- **Learning about other approaches or preventive programs that could be implemented within their child's school that might help reduce discipline problems.**

Working together, parents, teachers, and administrators can not only enhance the quality of the school community in ways that will prevent discipline problems, but they can also work to minimize the long-term detrimental effects on students who may be affected by zero-tolerance policies.

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ERIC DIGEST
August 1999 • EDO-PS-99-11

Helping Middle School Students Make the Transition into High School

Nancy B. Mizelle

Young adolescents entering high school look forward to having more choices and making new and more friends; however, they also are concerned about being picked on and teased by older students, having harder work, making lower grades, and getting lost in a larger, unfamiliar school (Mizelle, 1995; Phelan, Yu, & Davidson, 1994).

As young adolescents make the transition into high school, many experience a decline in grades and attendance (Barone, Aguirre-Deandreis, & Trickett, 1991); they view themselves more negatively and experience an increased need for friendships (Hertzog et al., 1996); and by the end of 10th grade, as many as 6% drop out of school (Owings & Peng, 1992). For middle school students, including those who have been labeled "gifted" or "high-achieving," the transition into high school can be an unpleasant experience (Phelan, Yu, & Davidson, 1994).

Research has found, however, that when middle school students took part in a high school transition program with several diverse articulation activities, fewer students were retained in the transition grade (Mac Iver, 1990). Furthermore, middle school principals indicated that they expected fewer of their students to drop out before graduation when the school provided supportive advisory group activities or responsive remediation programs (Mac Iver & Epstein, 1991).

This Digest discusses how educators can ease students' transition into high school by providing challenging and supportive middle school environments and by designing transition programs that address the needs of students and their parents and that facilitate communication between middle school and high school educators.

Middle School Environment

Providing young adolescents with activities that relate directly to their transition into high school certainly is important; however, providing young adolescents with a challenging and supportive middle school experience is an equally important factor in their making a successful transition into high school (Belcher & Hatley, 1994; Mizelle, 1995; Oates, Flores, & Welshew, 1998). For example, Mizelle (1995) found that students who stayed together with the same teachers through sixth, seventh, and eighth grades and experienced more hands-on, life-related learning activities, integrated instruction, and cooperative learning groups were more successful in their transition to high school than were students from the same school who had a more traditional middle school experience.

Students also indicated that if their middle school teachers had held students more responsible for their learning, taught them more about strategies for learning on their own, and provided them a more challenging curriculum, their transition to high school would have been eased.

Similarly, in a comprehensive program at Sunrise Middle School in inner-city Philadelphia, Oates and her colleagues (1998) found that students who participated in a Community for Learning Program (CFL) were more successful in their transition into high school than students who had not participated in the CFL program. Key components of the CFL program were support and training for teachers, a learning management system designed to help middle school students develop a sense of responsibility for their own learning and behavior, and an emphasis on community and family involvement.

Transition Programs

According to Mac Iver (1990), a high school transition program includes a variety of activities that (1) provide students and parents with information about the new school, (2) provide students with social support during the transition, and (3) bring middle school and high school personnel together to learn about one another's curriculum and requirements.

Activities That Provide Information to Students and Parents. Middle school students want to know what high school is going to be like, and they and their parents need to know about and understand high school programs and procedures (Phelan, Yu, & Davidson, 1994). In particular, parents need to be actively involved in the decisions their eighth-graders are asked to make about classes they will take in ninth grade and understand the long-term effects of the course decisions (Paulson, 1994).

Some of the ways students can learn about high school include visiting the high school in the spring, perhaps to "shadow" a high school student; attending a presentation by a high school student or panel of students; visiting the high school in the fall for schedule information; attending a fall orientation assembly (preferably before school starts); and discussing high school regulations and procedures with eighth-grade teachers and counselors. In addition to face-to-face activities, another possible source of information is the Internet. High school students might, either as a class or club project, set up a Web page that would provide incoming students information on different high school activities and clubs and offer them an opportunity to get answers to any questions they may have from the "experts."

Activities That Provide Social Support. At a time when friendships and social interaction are particularly important for young adolescents, the normative transition into high school often serves to disrupt friendship networks and, thereby, interferes with students' success in high school (Barone et al., 1991). Thus, it is vital for a transition program to include activities that will provide incoming students social support activities that give students the opportunity to get to know and develop positive relationships with older students and other incoming students (Hertzog et al., 1996; Mac Iver, 1990). A "Big Sister/Brother"

Program that begins in eighth grade and continues through ninth grade, a spring social event for current and incoming high school students, and writing programs where eighth-graders correspond with high school students are just a few ways that transition programs can provide students social support. Middle and high school educators should also look for opportunities to develop more long-term activities such as peer mentoring or tutoring programs.

Activities That Bring Middle and High School Educators Together. Underlying successful high school transition programs are activities that bring middle school and high school administrators, counselors, and teachers together to learn about the programs, courses, curriculum, and requirements of their respective schools (Hertzog et al., 1996; Vars, 1998). Activities that create a mutual understanding of curriculum requirements at both levels and of the young adolescent learner will help educators at both levels to develop a high school transition program to meet the particular needs of their students. In addition to the more typical committee or team meetings with representatives from each level, these activities may include K-12 curriculum planning meetings, and teacher or administrator visitations, observations, and teaching exchanges.

Parent Involvement

The importance of parents being involved in their young adolescent students' transition from middle to high school can hardly be overestimated. When parents are involved in their student's transition to high school, they tend to stay involved in their child's school experiences (Mac Iver, 1990); and when parents are involved in their child's high school experiences, students have higher achievement (Linver & Silverberg, 1997; Paulson, 1994), are better adjusted (Hartos & Power, 1997), and are less likely to drop out of school (Horn & West, 1992).

Parent involvement in the transition process to high school can be encouraged through a variety of activities. Parents may be invited to participate in a conference (preferably at the middle school) with their child and the high school counselor to discuss course work and schedules, visit the high school with their child in the spring or in the fall, spend a day at the high school to help them understand what their child's life will be like, and help design and facilitate some of the articulation activities for students. In planning activities for parents, high school educators will want to remember that parents of students who are already in high school are an excellent resource for other parents and may also help to encourage new parents to be more involved in school activities. At the middle school level, teachers and administrators can inform parents about transition activities and encourage them to participate. Perhaps more importantly, they can work to keep parents involved in their child's education and school activities during the middle school years so that they are comfortable "coming to school" and confident that their involvement makes a difference in their child's academic success.

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This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, under contract number ED-99-CO-0020. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

Reading Pathfinder Web Site

Does your child need help with reading? Follow the yellow brick road through the Reading Pathfinder Web site!

Because reading is so much a part of our daily lives, learning to read is not an option but a necessity. Children who run into problems in learning to read must be helped through the process so that they can make their way later on. The U.S. Department of Education recently funded ERIC/EECE (the ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education) to identify and select the best resources available to answer reading-related questions of parents and educators, and to make these resources easily accessible on a Web site. ERIC/EECE launched the Reading Pathfinder Web site (http://readingpath.org) in late 1999.

ERIC/EECE works with representatives of several organizations to assure that Reading Pathfinder organizes the best available information on literacy through third grade. These organizations include America Reads Challenge (ARC); International Reading Association (IRA); National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC); Southern California Comprehensive Assistance Center (SCCAC), which developed the Reading Success Network (RSN); ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading, English, and Communications (ERIC/REC); WETA Learning Disabilities Project, which sponsors LD OnLine, a comprehensive Internet service devoted to advancing those individuals with learning disabilities; and the National Research Council (NRC).

The group decided to use questions asked by parents and reading experts as a framework for organizing Web resources on Reading Pathfinder. The goal is to make easily accessible the best available information on how to help children become competent readers by about third grade.

If you want more information on Reading Pathfinder, visit the Web site and contact the Reading Pathfinder staff—Jean, Amanda, or Dianne—by email (readpath@uiuc.edu), telephone at 800-583-4135, fax at 217-333-3767, or by mail at the following address:

Reading Pathfinder Project; ERIC/EECE; University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Children's Research Center; 51 Gerty Drive; Champaign, IL 61820-7469.

Self-Esteem: Too Much of a Good Thing?

Peggy Patten

Articles about self-esteem regularly appear in newspapers, popular magazines, and education and psychology journals. Parents have been caught up in this preoccupation with their child's self-esteem and often ask, "How is my child feeling about himself/herself?" (Woods, 1999). In an article entitled "Self-esteem: Balance between Individual and Community," Carol Woods suggests that in our concern for children's self-esteem over all else, we are creating a nation of self-absorbed individuals who are incapable of assuming necessary levels of responsibility and contributing to the overall well-being of society. In her writings about self-esteem, Professor Lilian Katz (1993) also asks whether we are developing our children's self-esteem or narcissism, which she defines as an "excessive preoccupation with oneself" (Katz, 1993, p. 2).

So, is helping children feel good about themselves a bad thing to do?

Of course not, but constant messages to children about how wonderful they are may raise doubts about the credibility of the message and the messenger. As psychologist Martin Seligman (1998) notes, parents would do their children a greater service by helping them develop the abilities that warrant self-esteem—doing well in the world, taking personal responsibility, and getting along well with others.

One of parents' greatest balancing acts (and there are many) is to find the right tension between letting your child feel unconditional love as the center of your universe while gradually broadening the focus of his or her world view to include the needs of a wider community with a concern for the common good. Self-esteem is important, Carol Woods reminds us, but it is one of many vital elements in human development. It depends not only on self-respect, but also on mutual respect.

For More Information

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Adapted from a November/December 1999 online *Parent News* article (http://npin.org/pnews/1999/pnew1199/int1199d.html).

About NPIN and *Parent News Offline*

The National Parent Information Network (NPIN) was created in late 1993 to collect and disseminate information about high-quality resources for parents by the U.S. Department of Education, which supports NPIN through the ERIC system. Recently redesigned, NPIN is now one of the largest noncommercial collections of parenting information on the Internet (http://npin.org). In addition to its Web site, NPIN offers question-answering services via a toll-free telephone number (800-583-4135) and by email through the AskERIC service (askeric@askeric.org).

Another service provided by NPIN is *Parent News*, an Internet magazine that focuses on topics of interest to parents and professionals who work with parents. Many of the articles featured in *Parent News* have been developed in direct response to frequently asked questions. *Parent News Offline* has been created in response to requests for a newsletter that would introduce those without Internet access to the activities and information available through NPIN. We encourage you to share both our online and offline resources, including ERIC/EECE Digests, with parenting groups, schools, and community initiatives.

Recent Publications

Several ERIC/EECE and NPIN publications may be of interest to parents and those who work with them:

ERIC/EECE Digests (free two-page reports):

- *Parent-Teacher Conferences: Suggestions for Parents*
- *Easing the Teasing: How Parents Can Help Their Children*
- *Video Games: Research, Ratings, Recommendations*
- *Parenting Style and Its Correlates*
- *Television Violence: Content, Context, and Consequences*
- *If an Adolescent Begins to Fail in School, What Can Parents and Teachers Do?*

Other Publications:

- *Resilience Guide: A Collection of Resources on Resilience in Children and Families (1999, cat. #223, $15)*

To order ERIC/EECE publications, call 800-583-4135. Digests are also available on our Web site (http://ericeece.org/pubs/digests.html), or they can be ordered online at http://ericeece.org/digorder.html

Parent News Offline
ISSN 1526-2596

Published twice yearly by the National Parent Information Network, ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 51 Gerty Drive, Champaign, IL 61820-7469; 800-583-4135 (voice/tty), 217-333-1386 (voice), 217-333-3767 (fax), ericeece@uiuc.edu (email), http://ericeece.org (Web).

This project was funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, under contract no. ED-99-CO-0020. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

Editor: Anne S. Robertson
Spring 2000, Vol. 2, No. 1

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Parent News Offline

Vol. 2, No. 2, Fall 2000

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Home Visiting as a Tool to Ease High School Transitions

Anne S. Robertson

Home visiting is typically linked to early childhood or early intervention programs for new parents and young children. In many of these programs, specially trained professional or lay home visitors meet individually with new parents and their children to provide information on the child's health, education, and development; information on resources within the community; and friendly support for parenting concerns. Effective home visiting has been linked to a number of positive outcomes for parents and young children, including a reduced need for emergency medical care, increased confidence in parenting abilities, reductions in the use of government services such as food stamps, and an increase in a parent's capacity to become economically independent (Behrman, 1993, pp. 84-85). Now, some educators are learning that home visits can help families with older children by improving communication between parents and teachers and easing the transition between middle school and high school.

For the past three years, Oregon High School, located in Oregon, Illinois, has dedicated time for several members of its staff—including teachers, the principal, and the vice-principal—to visit the home of every incoming freshman. The program began when it became clear that parents and students needed more information than they had previously received about the high school, such as courses available, student organizations and activities, and school policies. It was decided that the most effective way to be certain that every family received information was for staff members to "hand-carry" a packet of information and provide a home visit to every freshman student's home. Two of the most notable benefits that staff members have observed are increased self-confidence among incoming students and increased participation of parents in their child's school.

Some educators are learning that home visits can help families with older children by improving communication between parents and teachers...

Kathleen Hughes coordinates Oregon's Parent Connection, a local parent and family center that serves the entire community. Hughes says that the high school home visiting program has been active for three years, and parents anticipate and enjoy the home visits. Hughes feels that since so many key staff members at

Oregon High School are involved, including the school's principal, the home visiting program is particularly useful in building partnerships and communication. When parents are visited at their home, the parents feel relaxed about sharing some of their concerns and feelings regarding their child's transition into secondary school. The positive impact of the program was not fully recognized until this year when staff members fell a little behind schedule with their home visits because of a larger than expected freshman class enrollment. Parents began calling the school to arrange the home visit because they were concerned that their family had been overlooked. Staff reassured the parents that their family had not been forgotten and that their visit would be scheduled shortly.

The materials that are combined in the packets distributed at the home visits include:

- Listings of family and youth help hotlines
- Listings of local support groups
- Descriptions of the responsibilities of parents who chaperone a youth party or activity
- Descriptions of student activities and clubs
- Photographs and information about Oregon High School staff
- School calendar and list of important dates
- Daily high school schedule
- Map of the high school
- Planning guide for the student's future after graduation.

Another nice addition to the packet is a listing of school policies written in a friendly format that describes some of the reasons for a rule or policy. For example, one item included in the packet discusses the issue of school attendance in the context of helping the student learn appropriate work habits, including punctuality, reliability, and dependability, and notes the relationship between attendance and school performance, indicating that higher attendance generally correlates with school success. Exceptions to the school attendance policies are also clearly noted.

Organizing the home visiting each year for the incoming freshman class at Oregon High School is initially time consuming. However, the high school staff and Parent Connection Coordinator Kathleen Hughes feel that, as with most preventive efforts, the home visits will pay benefits over the next four years through increased understanding and confidence of both parents and students as they become engaged in the secondary school experience.

For More Information

Behrman, Richard E. (Ed.). (1993). Home visiting [Special Issue]. *Future of Children, 3*(3).

Robertson, Anne S. (1997). Homevisiting: Bridging the gap between the family and the community. *Parent News* [Online], *3*(7). Available: http://npin.org/pnews/pnews797/pnew797c.html.

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The parent difference: Uniting school, family, and community (Abstract). [Online]. Available: http://npin.org/books/barcla96.html.

Home visiting: Promoting healthy parent and child development (Book Summary). *Parent News* [Online], *4*(4). Available: http://npin.org/pnews/1998/pnew498/pnew498k.html.

Adapted from a September/October 2000 online *Parent News* article (http://npin.org/pnews/2000/pnew900/spor900.html).

Is School Internet Access Improving Your Child's Education?

Your child's school may have Internet access, but how is it affecting his education? In the September/October online edition of *Parent News*, Omar Benton Ricks offers ways for parents to determine whether or not Internet access, now available in almost all public schools nationwide, is being used to improve the quality of education.

"Simply by getting involved and asking questions," says Ricks, parents can convey to schools that they need to prioritize more than just connectivity. How good is the connection? Do teachers feel adequately prepared to use various computer technologies? Are there staff devoted to fixing computer problems? How are teachers applying these new educational technologies in the classroom?

Parents will find a helpful list of questions to consider on each of these topics. The article also identifies present nationwide trends in these topic areas and uses data from national studies to answer the questions posed above.

The article is located at http://npin.org/pnews/2000/pnew900/int900a.html.

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PUBLICATIONS

October 2000

• ERIC Digests (No cost or shipping charges.)

• 2000 Digests

☐ *Mathematics Standards for Pre-K through Grade 2*
☐ *K-12 Single-Sex Education: What Does the Research Say?*
☐ *The Role of Curriculum Models in Early Childhood Education*
☐ *Differentiation of Instruction in the Elementary Grades*
☐ *Integrative Curriculum in a Standards-Based World*
☐ *Computers and Young Children*

• 1999 Digests

☐ *Curriculum Disputes in Early Childhood Education*
☐ *Parent-Teacher Conferences: Suggestions for Parents*
☐ Spanish Version
☐ *Helping Middle School Students Make the Transition into High School* ☐ Korean Version
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☐ *Selecting Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Materials: Suggestions for Service Providers*
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☐ *Parenting Style and Its Correlates*
☐ *Adopted Children in the Early Childhood Classroom*
☐ *Language and Literacy Environments in Preschools*

• 1998 Digests

☐ *Child Care Consumer Education on the Internet*
☐ *Video Games: Research, Ratings, Recommendations*
☐ *Twins in School: What Teachers Should Know*
☐ *Early Childhood Violence Prevention*
☐ *Issues in Selecting Topics for Projects*
☐ *He Has a Summer Birthday: The Kindergarten Entrance Age Dilemma* ☐ Spanish Version
☐ *The Transition to Middle School*
☐ *Motivation and Middle School Students* ☐ Spanish Version
☐ *Grouping Students for Instruction in Middle Schools*
☐ *Father Involvement in Schools* ☐ Spanish Version
☐ *Failure Syndrome Students*
☐ *Loneliness in Young Children*

• 1997 Digests

☐ *Television Violence: Content, Context, and Consequences*
☐ *Looping: Adding Time, Strengthening Relationships*
☐ *Helping Young Children Deal with Anger* ☐ Spanish Version
☐ *Child-Initiated Learning Activities for Young Children Living in Poverty*
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☐ *When Retention Is Recommended, What Should Parents Do?*
☐ *Student-Led Conferences at the Middle Level*
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☐ Spanish Version
☐ *Bullying in School* ☐ Spanish Version
☐ *The Debate over Spanking*

• 1996 Digests

☐ *Key Characteristics of Middle Level Schools*
☐ *Working with Shy or Withdrawn Students*
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• ERIC/EECE Newsletters & Journal

☐ *ERIC/EECE Newsletter*: Twice yearly, free; check here to receive the current issue.
☐ *Parent News Offline*: Twice yearly, free; check here to receive the current issue.
Early Childhood Research & Practice: Available only on the Internet at http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/.

In a hurry? Call 800-583-4135 or
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http://ericeece.org/digorder.html

• Resource Lists (No cost or shipping charges.)

☐ *Native Americans: Books and Resources.* September 2000.
☐ *Bullying in Schools: Resources.* September 2000.
☐ *Developmentally Appropriate Practices in Primary Education.* September 2000.
☐ *The Project Approach.* September 2000.
☐ *Scheduling at the Middle Level.* September 2000.
☐ *Resources on Brain Development.* September 2000.
☐ *Early Childhood Education Curriculum Models.* August 2000.

• Major Publications

- ☐ *Resilience Guide: A Collection of Resources on Resilience in Children and Families* (1999). B. Cesarone, ed. Cat. #223. $15.
- ☐ *Proceedings of the Families, Technology, and Education Conference* (1998). Anne S. Robertson, ed. Cat. #222. $15.
- ☐ *The Project Approach Catalog 3*, by the Project Approach Study Group (2000). Judy Helm, ed. Cat. #224. $10.
- ☐ *Rearview Mirror: Reflections on a Preschool Car Project*, by Sallee Beneke (1998). Cat. #220. $10.
- ☐ *A to Z: The Early Childhood Educator's Guide to the Internet* (Rev. 1998). Cat. #214. Loose-leaf pages only. $10.
  - ☐ $15 with binder.
- ☐ *Child Development Knowledge and Teachers of Young Children*, by Lilian G. Katz (1997). Cat. #217. $10.
- ☐ *Reflections on the Reggio Emilia Approach*, a collection of seven papers (1994). Cat. #215. $15.
- ☐ *Distinctions between Self-Esteem and Narcissism: Implications for Practice*, by Lilian G. Katz (1993). Cat. #212. $10.
- ☐ *Dispositions: Definitions and Implications for Early Childhood Practices*, by Lilian G. Katz (1993). Cat. #211. $5.

• ReadySearches

Computer search reprints with 60 to 100 abstracts of ERIC documents and journal articles ($8 each).

- ☐ *School Readiness.* (Cat. #108).
- ☐ *Developmentally Appropriate Programs for Young Children.* (Cat. #109).
- ☐ *Mixed-Age Groups in Early Childhood and Elementary Education.* (Cat. #112).
- ☐ *Parent-Teacher Conferences, Report Cards, and Portfolios: Kindergarten through Grade 12.* (Cat. #120).
- ☐ *Parent Education.* (Cat. #123).
- ☐ *Kindergarten Scheduling/Research.* (Cat. #127).
- ☐ *The Reggio Emilia Approach.* (Cat. #137).

In a hurry? Phone in your credit card order to 800-583-4135.

The full texts of Digests, Resource Lists, and out-of-print materials are available on the Web at http://ericeece.org/eecepub.html

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Parent News Continues Series on Educational Alternatives

A recent series of *Parent News* online articles may help parents consider the merits of several educational alternatives that have been in the national spotlight lately. The September/October 2000 issue of *Parent News* features an article on charter schools, and an article on school vouchers appears in the November/December 2000 issue. In these articles, NPIN's Saran Donahoo has discussed the purposes, histories, benefits, concerns, and future challenges of vouchers and charter schools.

According to Donahoo, these alternatives give many parents who are frustrated with public schools a feeling of choice and autonomy. The parents who advocate voucher programs, says Donahoo, point out that most voucher programs are intended to help low-income families provide a higher-quality education for their children than many urban public schools can offer. Parents can use these funds to cover a portion of the tuition at private schools or public schools outside of their child's district.

One central concern to which Donahoo points for both alternatives is how they are funded. For charter schools, funding is provided by a combination of state and federal sources, but is contingent upon the schools meeting set performance goals. With vouchers, questions about funding have led to serious First Amendment challenges in Vermont and Maine, among several other states.

Another concern Donahoo addresses is the effect of these alternatives on the families they are intended to help. Both voucher and charter school proponents argue that these options offer relief for families whose children might not otherwise have access to a high-quality education. But critics point out that vouchers do not cover enough of private school tuition for many poor families to be able to afford it, while many charter schools are ill-prepared for students with disabilities.

The articles cover the historical and legal bases for both alternatives and take critical looks at the benefits and problems proponents and critics claim. For those seeking further information, Donahoo also includes extensive online and print reference lists for both topics. Donahoo's series on schooling alternatives will continue in the January/February 2001 issue of *Parent News* with a look at home schooling.

Public Schools Partnering with Faith Communities

Anne S. Robertson

In an effort to end the confusion over the legal implications of public schools collaborating with local faith communities, and to clarify how the guidelines might be implemented in local communities and schools, the Department of Education developed the Religion and Public Schools Kit. The kit offers an overview of the First Amendment; some individual guides for parents, teachers, and volunteers; and some examples of promising programs that have been developed through successful partnerships between schools and faith communities. The parents' guide outlines frequent concerns on the subject of religious expression in schools, including ways to find common ground to address the religion-in-schools issue, ways of expressing faith while in school, religious holidays, and religious clubs.

One successful example of collaboration between public schools and faith communities has been the school district of St. Petersburg, Florida. Racial unrest in the community made local people aware that children had few positive after-school activities available and that youth needed more attention and monitoring. Local ministers and members of the lay faith communities collaborated with other community representatives and approached the school board with their ideas to develop safe after-school and summer programs for young people. From this beginning, many youth have been served through the Urban Fellowship Mentoring, Tutoring and Enrichment Program, which has offered a growing variety of enrichment activities for young people.

For More Information

A parent's guide to religion in the public schools [Online]. Available: http://www.fac.org/publicat/parents/parents.htm.

U.S. Department of Education. (1999). *Religion and public schools* [Online]. Available: http://www.ed.gov/inits/religionandschools/.

U.S. Department of Education. (2000). Faith communities partner with public schools to help children learn. *Community Update, 74*(2).

Adapted from a September/October 2000 online *Parent News* article (http://npin.org/pnews/2000/pnew900/int900d.html).

About NPIN and *Parent News Offline*

The National Parent Information Network (NPIN) was created in 1993 to collect and disseminate information about high-quality resources for parents by the U.S. Department of Education, which supports NPIN through the ERIC system. NPIN is now one of the largest noncommercial collections of parenting information on the Internet (http://npin.org). In addition to its Web site, NPIN offers question-answering services via a toll-free telephone number (800-583-4135) and by email through the AskERIC service (askeric@askeric.org).

Another service provided by NPIN is *Parent News*, an Internet magazine that focuses on topics of interest to parents and professionals who work with parents. Many of the articles featured in *Parent News* have been developed in direct response to frequently asked questions. *Parent News Offline* has been created in response to requests for a newsletter that would introduce those without Internet access to the activities and information available through NPIN. We encourage you to share both our online and offline resources, including ERIC/EECE Digests, with parenting groups, schools, and community initiatives.

In the Latest Online *Parent News*

The final *Parent News* of the year 2000 features Peggy Patten's review of Ellen Galinsky's recent book, *Ask the Children: What America's Children Really Think about Working Parents* (1999). Patten highlights several parts of the book that parents may find interesting, including the following:

- Work and home life do not necessarily detract from, and may actually enhance, each other.
- Most children of working parents do not mind their parents working so long as children and parents can still spend time together.
- Children enjoy spending both "focused time" and "hang around time" together with one or both parents.
- Children see how their parents feel about their jobs, even if the parents try not to "bring their work home with them."

The book's author, Ellen Galinsky, is co-founder and president of the Families and Work Institute in New York City and an authority on work-family issues. Her book is published by HarperTrade. Patten's review and discussion of Galinsky's book appear at http://npin.org/pnews.html.

Parent News Offline
ISSN 1526-2596

Published twice yearly by the National Parent Information Network, ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 51 Gerty Drive, Champaign, IL 61820-7469; 800-583-4135 (voice/tty), 217-333-1386 (voice), 217-333-3767 (fax), ericeece@uiuc.edu (email), http://ericeece.org (Web).

This project was funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, under contract no. ED-99-CO-0020. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

Editor: Anne S. Robertson
Asst. Editor: Omar Ricks
Fall 2000, Vol. 2, No. 2

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